What specialty should I choose?

Some people realised they wanted to pursue a career in orthopaedic surgery while they were in pre-school. Some people finish medicine with no idea about which career they wish to pursue or feel they could do several specialties. Most people fall towards the latter end of this spectrum, however, the catch is that given the large numbers of medical students, it has become increasingly difficult to enter a competitive specialty without having made a significant time commitment (in terms of networking, projects, terms).

As always, do not panic.

Firstly, you should consider all specialties. Medical students often do not realize the non-hospital specialties that are available to them (e.g. Pathology, Public Health, Medical Administration). There is a specialty for every type of personality and person. The JMO forum created a comprehensive guide to all the available specialties, and it’s available at this link: The Doctor’s GPS

Criteria that you may consider when choosing a specialty

**Salary** (surgeons and anaesthetists do earn more than other specialties - look at the salary surveys).

**Lifestyle** (surgeons can have busy lifestyles, with some specialties requiring ongoing on-call work. In contrast, general practitioners can control the number and length of days they work).
**Interest** (general practice can involve many subacute presentations that may or may not interest you, while emergency can involve lifelong exposure to acute presentations that can be exhausting).

**Competitiveness** (plastic surgery has only a handful of places across the nation and may require several years to get on to while psychiatry is an area of shortage and will take less time to get on to).

**Third world work** (surgery and anaesthetics are specialties that are in demand by organisations such as *Medecins Sans Frontieres*).

**Workforce need** (rural health is an area of need, and this may compel you to go outside Sydney to practice medicine. The flipside of this is that there is an oversupply of specialist physicians - the AIHW 2025 report shows this, and makes predictions about which areas require more doctors). The [HWA Report](#).

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- What specialty should I pick?
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